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**Analyzing the effect of an arch support functional insole on walking and jogging  
in young, healthy females**

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# Analyzing the effect of an arch support functional insole on walking and jogging in young, healthy females

## Abstract.

**BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE:** The aim of this study was to explore the effectiveness of arch support functional insoles to prevent metatarsalgia.

**METHOD:** 25 healthy females participated in the study. A Vicon motion capture system was used to collect kinematics data of the lower limb. A AMTI force plate was used to record the vertical ground reaction force (GRF), and the Novel Pedar - X System was used to measure foot pressure while subjects wore normal insoles or functional insoles with an arch support during walking and jogging.

**RESULTS:** With the arch support functional insoles, the first metatarsal (FM) region's contact area was increased and the peak pressure and time-pressure integral of the FM and second and third metatarsal (SATM) areas were decreased. This suggests less risk of longitude stress injuries of these areas. The ankle dorsiflexion angle of jogging with the 'arch support functional insoles' (RF) and walking with the 'arch support functional insoles' (WF) were significantly increased at initial contact and the knee and hip flexion angle of RF and WF were reduced. The peak hip extension angle of WF and RF also declined. The vertical loading rate of RF was lower, which would be beneficial in reducing the risk of lower limb injuries during jogging.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The results demonstrate that arch support functional insoles can be used effectively to prevent and decrease pain and promote a suitable weight-bearing pattern in the foot for promoting the health of young females.

Keywords: arch support, insoles, gait, biomechanics

## 1. Introduction

Metatarsalgia is a frequent complaint in the general population [1]. Metatarsalgia is related to

52 acquired foot deformities which include hallux valgus, in the metatarsophalangeal joints,  
53 rheumatoid arthritis and the associated disruption of the plantar fat pad [2]. These common forefoot  
54 deformities predominantly affect the female population especially the older females [3]. Therefore,  
55 it is necessary and desirable to prevent metatarsal pain in these young women. In addition, the most  
56 common site for foot pain in young women is the metatarsal heads (25.0%) has been recorded  
57 which is secondary to the heel [4]. A fundamental etiological component of metatarsal pain is the  
58 repetitive load observed in the forefoot, and the most common cause was due to the increased load  
59 of one or more metatarsal heads during the stance phase of gait [5]. Metatarsal pain is often defined  
60 as one or two metatarsal pain regions under the forefoot [2]. The pain extensively amplifies during  
61 walking and jogging which is negative to exercise and has been associated with a reduced quality of  
62 life [6]. The benefits of surgical treatment for metatarsal pain has been disputed due to the high risk  
63 and multiple procedures involved [7]. For less severe and lighter symptoms with no obvious pain in  
64 the callosity and associated bone secondary deformity, it has been suggested to use conservative  
65 treatments such as fitted insoles.

66 Metatarsal pads are commonly used as conservative treatments of metatarsalgia which could  
67 lead to a redistribution of pressure under the foot to considerably decrease the peak pressure of  
68 metatarsal head region. This process could be useful in the non-operative management of  
69 metatarsalgia [8,9]. Kang et al., pointed out that expanding the metatarsal pads to cover a larger area  
70 by elevating the possibly fallen horizontal arch of the forefoot could diminish plantar pressure under  
71 the painful metatarsal heads [3]. In clinical practice, medial arch support is often prescribed by the  
72 podiatrist to manage the pronated foot, and beneficial changes in ankle kinematics [10] and foot  
73 pain [11] have been observed. The arch support insole adds an arch support to redistribute the foot  
74 pressure. Although the use of support material is low-cost, it is difficult to keep the support under  
75 the foot in the correct position as slippage has been noted when the foot moves. Therefore, the  
76 insole used in this study was fixed to the arch support on the insoles to ensure that they were in the  
77 correct position.

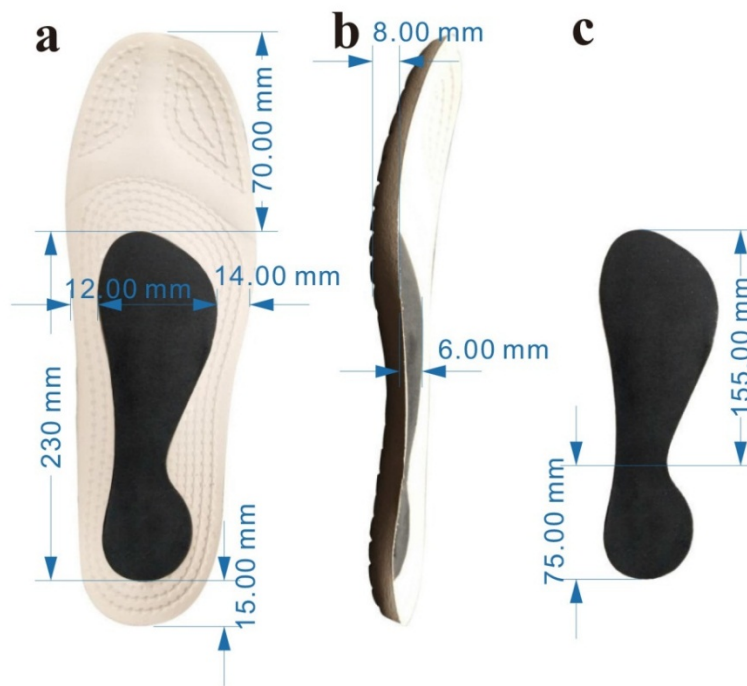
78 Brodtkorb et al., noted that due to the structure of the foot, that included having a rigid lever  
79 effect and the special interconnections between the metatarsal and plantar fasciitis, adding a support  
80 to the foot may influence more areas [12]. The foot is a multi-joint system, and the adding of the  
81 arch may also affect the movement of the other lower limb joints. The aim of this study therefore

was to explore the effect of arch support insoles on gait during walking and jogging by analyzing plantar pressure, vertical ground reaction force (GRF) and kinematics data of the lower limb. We hypothesized that the insoles, by adding an arch support might increase the contact area of the feet and insoles, and enhance the attenuation effect of arch. This would increase the loading-share area and as a result, would reduce the load of forefoot to ease and prevent metatarsal pain. A further aim of the study was to explore if the kinematic data of lower limb would also be influenced.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

Twenty five healthy females (foot size: 37 European size, age:  $23.15 \pm 1.68$  years, height:  $162.00 \pm 2.80$  cm, weight:  $51.58 \pm 2.74$  kg, with the right leg being dominant) were voluntarily engaged in this study. All participants were healthy and had normal development of the foot without clinical history, pes cavus, flat foot, foot disease and/or motor disorder. All participants' feet were suitable to the insoles for adding the arch support. The arch support insole consisted of an insole body and an arch support (figure1). The arch support was mainly inserted at the first two thirds of the black area as outlined in the figure provided. When compared to the outside material of insole, the foot arch area consisted of stiff material to provide a more supportive role helping the function of the arch part of the foot. Prior to the study, for a period of 48 hours, the participants were instructed not to engage in any strenuous exercise. All participants volunteered to take part in the study, written informed consent was obtained, and the study was approved by the Human Ethic Committee of Ningbo University (Number: RAGH20170615).



103

104 *Figure 1 The functional insoles with an arch support (right) in this study.*

105 *Figure 1-a represents the picture of arch support functional insoles from the front plane view.*

106 *Figure 1-b shows the photo of **the** arch support functional insoles from the lateral plane view.*

107 *Figure 1-c exhibits the stiffness arch support material.*

108

## 109 2.2. Protocol

110 The Novel Pedar-X System (Germany) was selected in this study to collect the plantar pressure  
 111 of the right lower limb. **The** system's **data collection frequency** was set **at** 100Hz to acquire the data  
 112 while wearing normal insoles, **and when wearing arch** support functional insoles during walking  
 113 and jogging. **In addition**, an eight camera Vicon three dimensional infrared motion capture system  
 114 (Oxford Metrics Ltd., Oxford, UK) with the frequency of 200Hz **was used to collect the** kinematics  
 115 data of lower limb. **The** AMTI force plate (Advanced Mechanical Technology Inc., Watertown,  
 116 USA) **set at a** frequency of 1000 Hz was used to record the GRF.

117 All participants were asked to wear the arch support functional insoles and normal insoles to  
 118 walk and jog **for a total of 8** times **on a** 15m long straight trial. According to the product description,  
 119 all subject **were calibrated** for using the sensor in a way that would reduce the error caused by  
 120 sensor damage. To reduce the impact of speed, **subjects were also asked** to walk and jog in their  
 121 most **natural** way with right foot striking on the force plate. The walking velocity was between 1.3

122 to 1.5 m/s under WF and WN conditions. The jogging velocity was between 2.1 to 2.4 m/s under  
123 WF and WN conditions. According to the function of the insoles and the anatomical structure of the  
124 foot, the foot **was** divided into eight areas: big toe (BT), other toes (OT), the first metatarsal (FM),  
125 second and third metatarsals (SATM), fourth and fifth metatarsals (FAFM), middle mid-foot (MMF),  
126 lateral mid-foot (LMF) and hind-foot (HF).

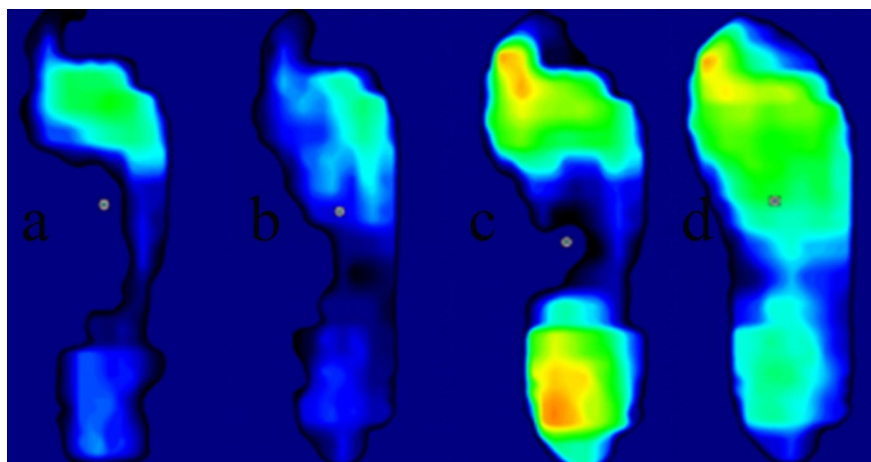
### 127 2.3. Data analysis

128 All statistical results of each trail were analyzed **using** SPSS19.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL,  
129 USA). **Paired-sampled** T test was used to compare the deviation of the plantar pressure, lower limb  
130 kinematics and vertical GRF between jogging with the ‘arch support functional insoles’ (RF), and  
131 jogging with the normal insoles (RN), and between walking with the ‘arch support functional  
132 insoles’ (WF) and walking with the normal insoles (WN). Statistical significance set at 0.05 level.

133

## 134 3. Result

### 135 3.1. Plantar pressure



136

137 *Figure 2 The plantar distribution of the right foot at the maximum contact area during entire*  
138 *support period. Note: Figure 2-a: WN, figure2-b:WF, figure 2-c: RN, figure2-d:RF*

139

140 **Figure 2** shows **the** plantar distribution of the right foot at the maximum contact area **during the**  
141 **entire support period of one participant while performing** WN, WF, RN and RF. From figure 2 **clear**  
142 **differences of contact area and plantar pressure distribution can be observed. The findings indicate**  
143 **that WF and RF has more contact area and even pressure distribution than WN and RN respectively.**

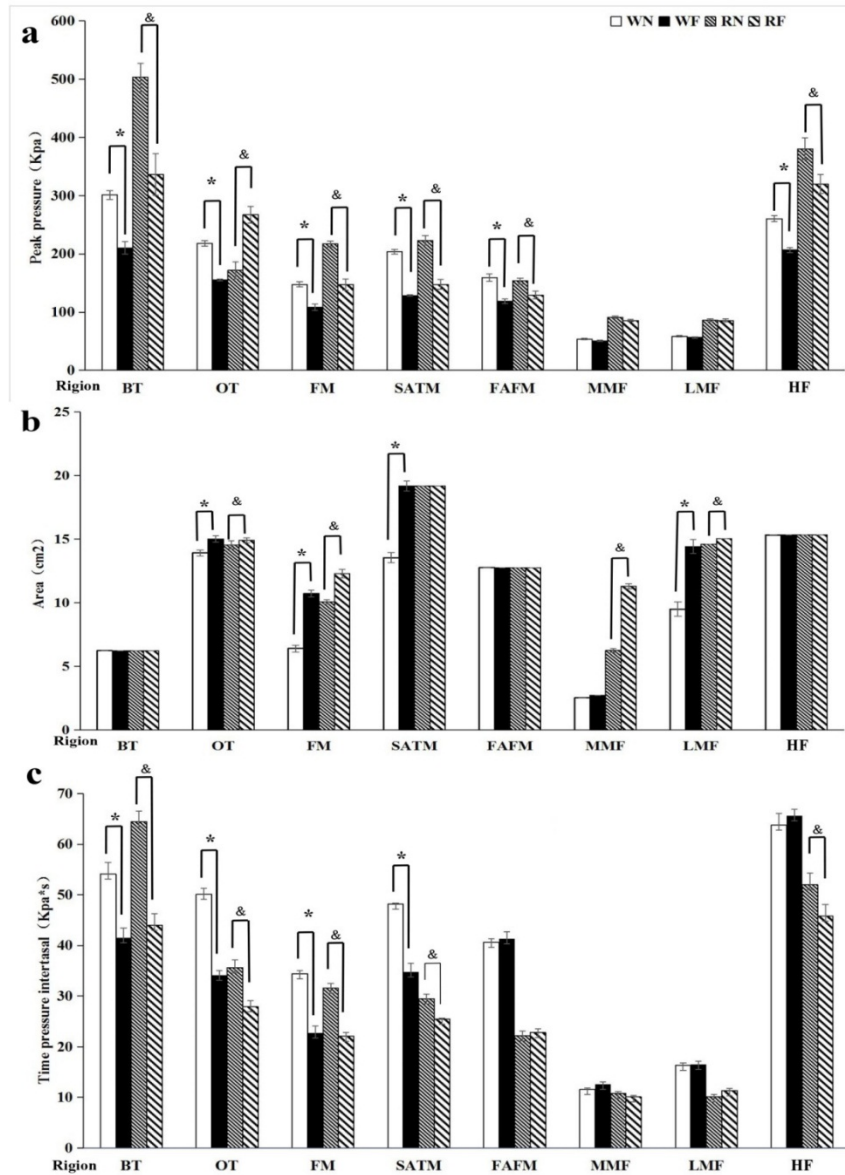


Figure 3 The comparison of different foot area peak pressure, contact area and time-pressure integral.

Figure 3-a presents the comparison of different foot area's peak pressures. Figure 3- b presents the comparison of different foot area's contact area. Figure 3-c presented the comparison of different foot area's pressure-time integral &represents a significant difference between RF and RN  $P < 0.05$ , and \* represents significant difference between WF and WN  $P < 0.05$ .

During walking, the peak pressures of BT, OT, FM, SATM, FAFM and HF were significantly

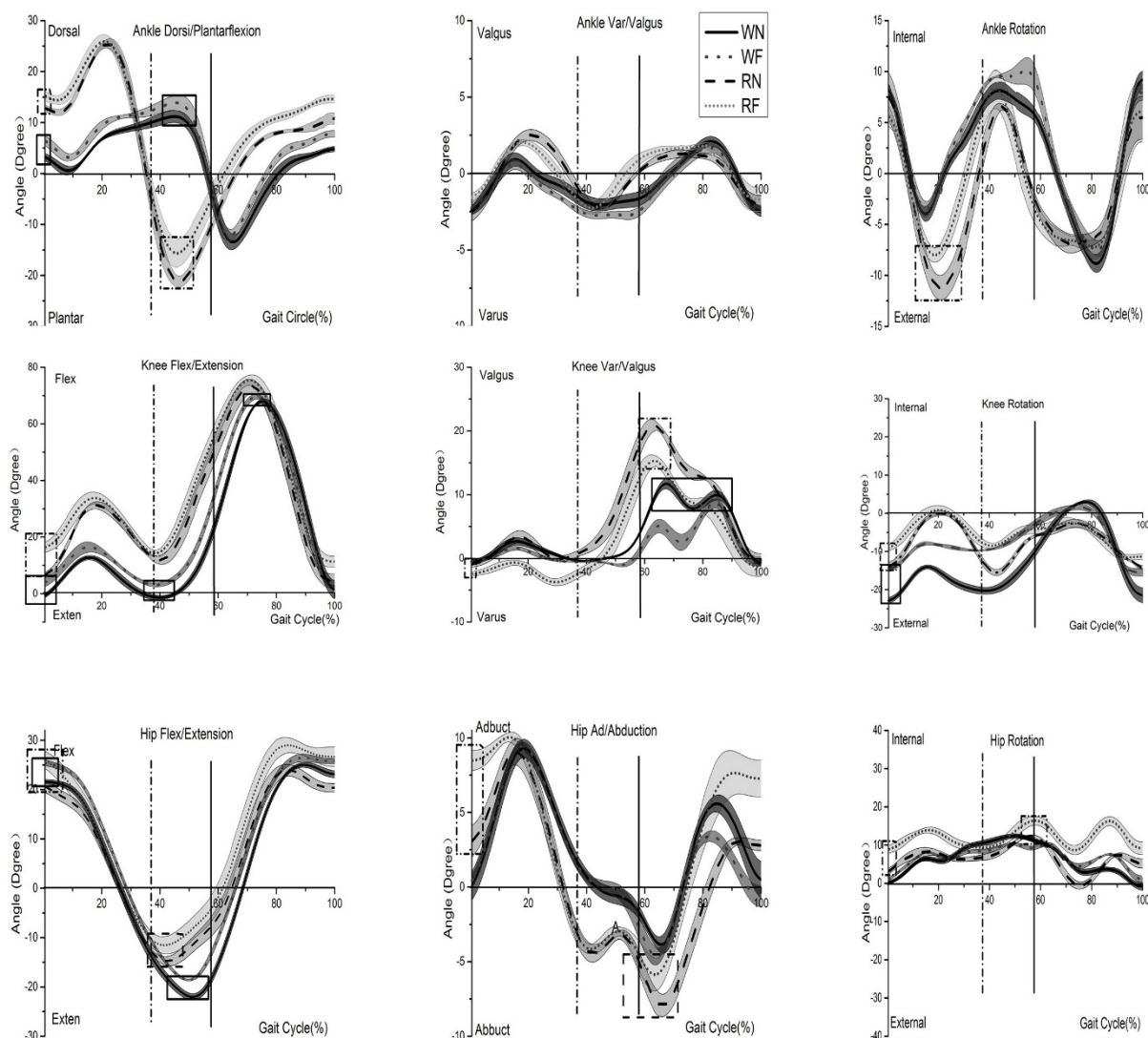


155 lower under WF condition compared to WN (figure 3-a). The contact areas of OT, FM, SATM and  
 156 LMF were also larger, with the other region showing no significant deviation under the WF  
 157 condition in comparison with WN (figure 3-b). The time-pressure integral of BT, OT, FM and  
 158 SATM under the WF condition indicated lower values and no significant difference found in the  
 159 other area compared to WN (figure 3-c).

160 During jogging, the peak pressure of BT, FM, SATM, FAFM and HF under RF condition were  
 161 lower than RN but the peak pressure of OT was larger (figure 3-a). The contact areas of OT, FM,  
 162 MMF and LMF under RF condition were larger than RN (figure 3-b). The time-pressure integrals of  
 163 BT, OT, FM, SATM and RF under RF condition were larger than RN (figure 3-c).

164

### 165 3.2. Kinematics



166

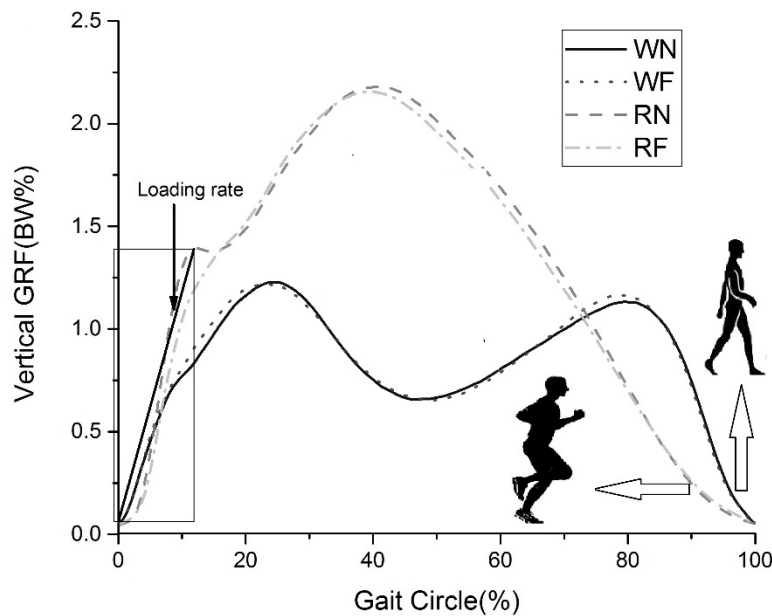
167 *Figure 4. The angle curve of the hip, knee and ankle during one gait cycle.*

168 *Note: In the figure, the vertical dashed line represents the time when the toes are out of the ground*  
169 *during slow jogging while the vertical solid line represents the time when the toes are off the ground*  
170 *during walking. The dotted rectangular box represents significant difference between RF and RN,*  
171 *and the solid rectangular frame represents significant difference between WF and WN  $P < 0.05$ .*  
172

173 Fig. 4 shows the three dimensional angle of mean knee, hip and ankle joints for WN, WF, RN  
174 and RF. During walking, in the sagittal plane, the ankle dorsiflexion angle was slightly increased at  
175 initial contact during WF, as a consequence of this, the knee and hip flexion angle during WF were  
176 greater at this moment in time. The peak ankle dorsiflexion angle of WF was greater in comparison  
177 to WN. The peak flexion angle of WF was larger than that of WN. The peak knee and hip extension  
178 angle of WF were lower than WN. In the front plane, the peak knee varus angle of WF was lower  
179 than that of WN. In the transverse plane, the knee external rotation angle of RF at the initial contact  
180 was larger than that of WN. The peak knee external rotation angle of WF was lower than that of  
181 WN.

182 During jogging, in the sagittal plane, compared to RN, the ankle dorsiflexion angle of RF  
183 during initial contact was greater along with the knee and hip flexion angle of RF during initial  
184 contact was larger. The peak ankle plantarflexion angle of RF was larger than RN. The peak hip  
185 extension angle of RF was greater than that of RN. In the front plane, the knee valgus angle and hip  
186 abduction angle of NF at initial contact was lower than that of RN. Compared with RN, the peak  
187 knee varus angle of RF was lower. The peak hip adduction angle of RF was lower than RN. In the  
188 transverse plane, compared with RN, the peak ankle and knee external rotation angle of RF were  
189 lower. The knee external rotation angle was lower while the hip internal rotation angle of RF was  
190 larger than that of WN at initial contact. The peak hip internal rotation angle of RF was lower in  
191 comparison to RN.

### 192 3.3. GRF



193

194 *Figure 5 The GRF time curve.*

195 *Note: The black oblique line of the rectangular area represents the vertical load growth rate of RN*  
 196 *during the initial contact phase. The vertical load rate of the GRF is the average loading rate of the*  
 197 *contact time to the first peak time, that is, the slope value of the force - time curve of this stage.*

198 The participants' vertical ground reaction forces (GRF) were normalized by body weight (BW).  
 199 The GRF of WF and WN showed no significant difference. RN has an impact peak in the gait cycle  
 200 of the stance phase, while the curve of RF is always on the rise without the peak value (the  
 201 rectangular area in figure 5). In addition, the vertical load growth rate of RN in the initial contact  
 202 phase was greater than that of RF ( $P < 0.05$ ).

203

#### 204 **4. Discussion**

205 From the plantar pressure data analysis, compared to the normal insoles, the arch support  
 206 functional insoles obviously reduced the peak pressure and time-pressure integral of FM and SATM  
 207 and increased the contact areas of OT, FM and LMF both in jogging and walking. The force  
 208 stressed on the forelimb could induce different degrees of metatarsal pain [12]. The increased loads  
 209 of one or more metatarsal heads might increase the metatarsal pain during the stance phase of gait  
 210 [13]. The decreased peak pressure and time-pressure integral could relieve the corresponding pain

211 areas [14]. The arch support functional insoles redistributed the plantar pressure and was observed  
212 to effectively reduce the peak pressure of metatarsals to decrease the risk of injury under longitude  
213 stress both in jogging and walking. The suitable arch support could transfer the pressure of the heel  
214 and metatarsal to the mid-foot area [15]. In this study, wearing the arch support functional insoles  
215 obviously increased the OT, FM, and LMF regions' contact area whenever walking and jogging.  
216 However, under normal conditions, the arch areas were relatively higher than other areas, so the  
217 contact areas in this region were less.

218 The patients with metatarsal pain have lower pain pressure threshold, thus they needed lower  
219 peak pressure to relieve their pain [9]. During walking, the peak pressure of the whole metatarsal  
220 area was significantly lower under WF condition compared to WN. During slow jogging, the peak  
221 pressure of BT, FM, SATM, FAFM and HF under RF condition were lower than RN. However, at  
222 the OT region, the peak pressure of RF was greater than RN, this may be attributed to the fact that  
223 during slow jogging, the arch support enhances the stimulation of OT, which resulted in the OT  
224 engaging in more grip to the ground. This provided greater contact area, which finally provided an  
225 increase in peak pressure.

226 The time-pressure integral has important implication to injuries: the higher time-pressure  
227 integral might induce metatarsal pain and other diseases [16], the lower time-pressure integral might  
228 decrease the pain and injury risk observed [14]. With the arch support provided by the arch support  
229 functional insoles, the time-pressure integrals of BT, OT, FM and SATM obviously decreased  
230 whenever walking and jogging, this might decrease the pain and injury risk of individuals wearing  
231 the insoles. Furthermore, a previous study pointed out that the loading of FM would inevitably lead  
232 to a stress transfer to the lateral area, and promote injury risk of the other areas and further induce  
233 the metastatic metatarsal pain [13]. In this study, the peak pressure of the whole metatarsal area  
234 significantly declined during walking, the peak pressure was not transferred to the other metatarsals.  
235 During jogging, the peak pressure and the time-pressure integral of FM and SATM also decreased  
236 with FAFM changing without statistical difference.

237 The foot is a multi-joint system, and the intervention of the arch part might affect the  
238 movement of the other lower limb joints. Through comparing the kinematics data, differences in  
239 WN and WF, RN and RF in the lower limb joints of the hip, knee, and ankle angle captured by the  
240 Vicon motion analysis system, found no significant difference in velocity between WN and WF, or

241 between RN and RNFI. However, the impact on the ankle, knee and hip joint angles were large,  
242 especially the angle at the initial contact and the changes in the peak angle. The data captured has  
243 demonstrated that arch support functional insoles has an influence on the kinematics of gait. Similar  
244 to a previous study, small changes were found in kinematics. In the sagittal plane, the increases in  
245 the peak ankle dorsiflexion of WF and peak ankle plantarflexion angle of RF were noted as a result  
246 of the comprehensive action of the compensatory posture adjustment made to stabilize the ankle  
247 joint [17]. The ankle dorsiflexion angle of RF and WF was significantly increased at initial contact  
248 and the knee and hip flexion angle of RF and WF were reduced at this moment, which was in  
249 accordance with previous studies that found an increase of the ankle dorsiflexion angle might  
250 induce increases of the knee or hip flexion angle [18]. With the foot orthodontic appliance, the ankle  
251 dorsiflexion increased in the initial contact phase during walking [19]. Previous articles revealed  
252 that greater knee flexion angles would lead to a greater knee flexion moment that would increase  
253 the risk of suffering [knee pain [20]. The peak hip extension angle of WF and RF was lower than  
254 that of normal conditions. The reduced hip extension during gait was helpful to reduce the force on  
255 the femoral head that could relieve the pain in the hip [21].

256 In the front plane, the peak knee varus angle of WF and RF were declined. One study  
257 declared that with the addition of an arch support knee varus torque was significantly increased  
258 which could promote a medial force bias during walking and jogging which might be beneficial to  
259 knee osteoarthritis patients [22]. The peak hip adduction of RF was reduced compared with RN, and  
260 according to previous studies the reduction in hip adduction may lead to a reduction in femoral  
261 internal rotation thus decreasing lateral compressive forces on the patella and subsequently improve  
262 knee pain [23]. In the transverse plane, the peak ankle external rotation angle of RF was slightly  
263 lower than RN. In this study, the peak ankle eversion angle of RF had not increased but slightly  
264 declined, but without statistically difference. This was different from findings of a previous study  
265 that suggested with a flattened arch support, the ankle eversion increased which had a limited effect  
266 to transfer the body weight to the medial longitudinal arch and even could eventually lead to  
267 different problems in the lower limb [24].

268 There were no significant difference of the GRF curve between the WN and WF ( $P < 0.05$ ), but  
269 during jogging, compared with RN, RF did not record the first impact peak. Tom et al., thought this  
270 impact peak related to the cushion of the heel contact and regarded it as the peak passive force [25].

271 It might be due to the arch support increasing the dorsiflexion of the ankle joint at initial contact,  
272 and decreasing the heel cushion effect, which resulted in the peak passive force declining [26]. The  
273 vertical load growth rate of RF in the initial contact phase was lower than that of RN. Furthermore,  
274 compared to the vertical, GRF was much flatter than that described by the previous articles due to  
275 the low speed and the shoes selected for this study. Many studies have suggested that GRF and  
276 vertical load growth are associated with jogging injuries, and higher loading rates might expose  
277 individuals to a greater risk for bony injuries such as knee osteoarthritis and stress fractures [27]. It  
278 is obvious that the vertical loading rate of RF and the passive impact were significantly lower,  
279 which would be beneficial to reduce the risk of lower limb injuries during jogging.

280 There were some limitations of this article. Firstly, as previous study indicated, it takes a long  
281 time for the foot to be fitted for the intervention [28]. This study only examined the short effect of  
282 the arch support functional insoles. Future studies should examine the longitudinal effects of  
283 insoles and the effect of group-specific people individuals need further examination. Secondly, in  
284 the plantar pressure measurement, we put the pressure insoles on the tested insoles. These fitted the  
285 normal insoles well, but they may have been fitted correctly to the courted insoles, so the results  
286 may not replicate real conditions. Further new techniques need to be developed to investigate this  
287 issue more closely. Thirdly, the sample size of this study was small and did not involve any  
288 metatarsal pain patients. There may be opportunities in the future to investigate patients wearing  
289 these arch support insoles.

290

## 291 5.0 Conclusion

292 The results of this study have demonstrated that the arch support functional insoles could be  
293 used effectively to prevent and decrease pain and promote a more suitable weight-bearing pattern in  
294 the foot for the health of people. The arch support functional insoles applied to shoes would be  
295 beneficial in preventing the metatarsal pain and promoting medial weight-bearing. The peak  
296 pressure, contact area and time-pressure integral were significantly changed by the arch support  
297 functional insoles. The arch support functional insoles obviously reduced the peak pressure and  
298 time-pressure integral of FM and SATM and increased the contact areas of OT, FM and LMF both  
299 in jogging and walking. The kinematic data of the lower limb's hip, knee and ankle also were also  
300 different at different levels, and small changes were observed in kinematics. The vertical loading

301 rate of RF and the passive impact were significantly lower, which would be beneficial to reduce the  
302 risk of lower limb injuries during jogging.

303

#### 304 **Conflict of interest**

305 The authors have no conflict of interest to report

306

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311

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391

392 **Appendix**

393 Table 1 The abbreviation in this article

Full word	Abbreviation
Big toe	BT
Other toe	OT
The first metatarsal	FM
Second and third metatarsals	SATM
Fourth and fifth metatarsals	FAFM
Middle mid-foot	MMF
Lateral mid-foot	LMF
Hind-foot	HF
Jogging with the ‘arch support functional insoles’	RF
Walking with the ‘arch support functional insoles’	WF
Walking with the normal insoles	WN
Jogging with the normal insoles	RN
Ground reaction force	GRF

394